

"The Human Element in Settlement Planning"

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The best way of introducing the topic of "The Human Element in Settlement Planning" is to call our attention to the attractive logo of this conference designed by that talented Canadian artist Frank Meirs. The Habitat logo says it all -- and more eloquently than all the torrents of words that have gushed forth since the beginning of this conference. The essence of Habitat is mankind, in the midst of his abode, within the context of his universe. This is not an egoistic view of man, not an anthropomorphic view of the world, not even a male chauvinist view. It is, I think, a humanist view most appropriate for Habitat because it states simply but most forcefully that in this age of industrial dehumanization and urban alienation, there is a need to make sure that humanity should be the center and the essence of settlement development.

How can this view and this vision be achieved in our planning of human settlements?

First, by re-introducing the human scale in the planning of all our physical and social structures;

Second, by seeing man in the context of his relationship with his fellowmen;

Third, by placing man in his rightful place within the primary group community;

Fourth, by affirming man's freedom to physical and socio-economic mobility; and

Finally, by seeing man as the central element in the material and social world which is the totality of ~~max~~ human settlements planning and development.

The Human Scale

There is a poster with a Da Vinci sketch of a man with outstretched hands and the legend -- "Let Man be the Measure." At the risk of undeservingly enriching the poster's manufacturer I propose that this be pinned on the office wall of every architect, engineer, technician or civil servant that has anything to do with human settlements planning.

Let Man be the measure. To every car designer responsible for gas guzzlers and air polluters, with outsized tires and protruding fins too large and heavy beyond actual need, we should say, Let Man be the measure.

To architects who design high rise apartments that serve as monuments to their massive egos but fail to provide the comforts of home, let us say, Let Man be the measure.

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To highway engineers who design six lane highways that whiz us from point A to point B but succeed somehow to prevent us from seeing birds and trees and the beauty of the countryside, Let Man be the measure.

To civic designers who make squares and plazas that dwarf the pedestrian and give him a sense of nothingness by the intruding vastness of his man-made environment, Let Man be the Measure.

Someone said that "a culture that is weak and decaying builds monuments." A culture that creates an environment so massive that the buildings and vehicles and plazas and highways reduce the people to impotent unimportance is dying. For the man-made super-human scale does not always uplift. It can vandalize human consciousness. The bulk of concrete, the strength of steel, and the sheen of glass when transformed into massive edifices that cow and threaten and belittle only remind us of our own weakness and vulnerability.

It is for these reasons, therefore, that we should rethink the scale of our surroundings -- our Habitat -- and remind those responsible for its creation and destruction that man is the scale by which they should test all the man-made things around him. It is hard enough in this age of complexities to lead a meaningful life. It does absolutely no good when all around us, our physical environment becomes a constant reminder that we are small and puny and soft and vulnerable, rather than warm and lively, and yes - loving.

Man and his Fellowmen

Man in relation to his fellowmen should be stressed in a world that threatens to take away his humanity by the intrusion of the physical man-made environment that ~~xxxx~~ engulfs him. By some historical process, our view of the nature of Man has shifted somehow from a belief that he is a social animal in groups to a conviction that he is a lone individual who rides alone. Even our perception of Man's burdens has changed -- the tribal elders who laid down the rules and made sure that they were followed have been replaced by the psychiatrist who probes into a man's neuroses and anxieties. *to find* There is a need, in the discussions here at Habitat, to bring out the social aspects of this human element.

I have been told that somewhere in New York, there exists a community where single men living alone, single women living alone, families with only one parent, old folks living alone, or young people living together now constitute a majority of the households. The family as a unit - with Mom, and Dad, and Brod, and Sis - has, somehow, quietly slipped away in this community.

Far from seeing this phenomenon as a banner of ^{personal} liberation, it saddens me. It wrenches me inside, also, when I walk the parks of great cities and see the old people whose existence has been reduced to the comfort of a park bench, the need to share reflected ~~in~~ in feeding wary squirrels and conversation finally reduced to clucking and cooing with pigeons.

Once, on a planning mission to Calcutta, a World Bank expert asked the Chief Planner of that city, "what provisions do you have in your plans for senior citizens?" To his surprise, the Chief Planner said, "None." With a smile, he said, "You see, in Calcutta, we do not have senior citizens -- we have grandmothers and grandfathers."

Rediscovery of Community

Man, in his primary group community, should be rediscovered. At the Vancouver art gallery at present, there is an exhibition of the results of an international competition for the planning of a low income community focused on my own city, Manila. First prize in this competition was won by a 35-year old architect from New Zealand named Ian Athfield. The main feature of Athfield's design which won him the first prize is that instead of designing a house of a poor slum dweller, he has laid out the premises wherein a community of men ^{and} women can work and play, eat and sleep, compete and cooperate, and quarrel and love.

In the modern cities of the World, there is a call to "popular participation" "community involvement," "citizen action" and other aspects of a back to the grassroots movement. Happily, for most cities in developing countries, there is little need for expensive bureaucratic structures that are ironically charged with the main task of getting people to participate in the performance of jobs that the bureaucrats themselves are supposed to be doing. I think it is a sad commentary on our state of affairs when the simple task of sweeping our front yards, mending our fences, and even the simple chore of getting the garbage out has to be done by government paid functionaries.

All these tasks, and many more, are cooperatively carried out by people in primary group communities all over the world. In the slum and squatter community where homes are built by self help, there is no need to exhort people to participate. They are already doing things together- solving their common problems, raising common resources, sharing the costs and the benefits of their common efforts.

The activities in human settlements, the business of life, are communal endeavors. This is the essence of popular participation-- the mobilization of efforts by adherence to a common goal and the need to meet common needs -- not the condescending and often paternalistic invitation of a dominant Establishment to come and participate and thereby cloak with legitimacy measures that have been formulated beforehand by the invisible hand of a manipulative power elite.

Freedom to Move

Human settlements
Human settlements are not static, like all organisms; they are born, they grow up, they reach maturity and then decline -- to die, yes, but hopefully, to be reborn again. Atop the ruins of ancient cities, modern cities are now flourishing. Archaeologists discover only the ~~material~~ remains of the activities, the ebb and flow of humanity responsible for growth and decline have left few traces.

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These days, we are all concerned about the problems arising from internal migration. The problems of very large cities -- congestion, pollution, frustration and confusion -- are often blamed on rural-urban migration. So, there are policies and programs that try to stem the ~~xtide~~ tide of population movements -- keep them down on the farm, reroute them to intermediate cities, keep them out of the very large metropolitan areas. Aside from the administrative aspects of these efforts, it is important to consider the moral dimension as well. The question has to be asked when considering these policies who stands to gain and who has to pay the consequences?

When measures to control population mobility are based on ethnic, political and discriminatory motivations, they should be condemned. For all the problems that they create, we should never forget that cities are, and have always been, the cradles of human civilization. To almost all migrants, they mean not only "bright lights" but a better tomorrow --if not for themselves, at least for their children. *unbekked*

The time will soon be upon us, when reconsideration of measures to control migration at the national level will have to be made at the international level as well. In this finite world, this spaceship earth, the need for living space is fast ~~dimin~~ eroding traditional concepts of sovereignty and nationalism. As with the nation, so with the world -- policies and measures of immigration based on discriminatory elements of the color of one's skin, the shape of one's eyes, the gods that one worships and the ideologies that one holds should be condemned.

The freedom to move, like all other basic freedoms, should be embodied in our system of choices. Let man be the judge of what is good or bad for him. He should be given access to information that will enable him to make up his mind whether to stay where he is or move to another place. Arbitrary rules and regulations discriminatory laws and all other measures that limit the area of choice should be scrapped. They should be replaced by positive indicators of the advantages and disadvantages of a range of human settlements, information made available to each individual, so that, in the final analysis, human movement will be based on a personal decision, not on negative constraints from an external regulating force.

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In discussing the human element in human settlements planning today, I think we have gone full circle. From the need to fit the environment to the scale of the individual, we moved to the basic nature of the family, the need for community, the urgency of a national human settlements strategy, the need to consider freedom of movement at that international level, and, finally, by placing the essence of movement within the area of personal choice, we have gone back to the fundamental unit of Man. This is as it should be -- when Man is in his Habitat, all's well with the world.

In painting the broad strokes of human issues in this introduction, I realize that I have not even scratched the surface. We are all fortunate today, however, that one of the foremost students of society is with us to discuss the subject of the human element in settlement planning.

Margaret Mead, in her seventy five years of "blackberry winters" on this planet, has been a "child, student, wife, mother and grandmother -- a woman who was liberated from convention more than fifty years ago and has lived life to the full." (Blackberry Winter, 1972). Within that time, she has studied and lived in a full range of societies, from deceptively simple Samoan villages to the concrete towers of Manhattan. Her books cover the full span of societal changes, from Coming of Age in Samoa to A Rap ~~wixxRax~~ on Race. It is to her credit, and it is a full testimony to her status as a member of the human race that in this long journey, she has stuck consistently to the view that the human element is the core and the energy source of development and that all the growth we can achieve and all the progress we can earn are all meaningless if, in the process, we lose the true essence of our humanity. ~~It is with a great deal of pleasure, therefore, that I welcome to our midst, Dr. Margaret Mead.~~

I can think of no other person, therefore, who can discuss the subject of the human element better than our great speaker, Margaret Mead.

A. A. Laquian